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Ethnicity and Violence in
Kwazulu-Natal:
1984-1994

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Master of Arts
in African Area Studies

by

Gregory Mark Furbish

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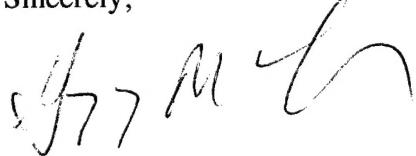
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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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Gregory Mark Furbish

Master of Arts in African Area Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 1996

Professor Boniface I. Obichere, Chair

This thesis looks at ethnicity as a contributing factor in the violence which rocked the Kwazulu-Natal region of South Africa from 1984-1994. I begin by examining the term *ethnicity* and attempt to come up with a working definition. Ethnic identity is defined by having certain cultural and historical characteristics which are unique thus establishing a group identity which sets them apart from the *other*. I conclude that a person's ethnic identity is a relatively fluid allowing escape and entry based on the situation, but that this flexibility is dependant upon the norms of society in which they live. I then begin to trace the evolution of Zulu history and attempt to show how Zulu ethnicity may have formed. Although it was a complicated process, Zulu ethnicity was not only the result of actions of colonial administrators and the

subsequent apartheid system, but also the result of actions of ethnic entrepreneurs consisting of an emerging business class, remnant Zulu royalty and traditional authorities within African society. Furthermore, Zulu ethnic identity was formed within African society itself as the result of their perceptions of their own distinctiveness based upon commonly held ideals of the Zulu kingdom and its founder, Shaka. The violence that emerged was the result of this ethnic identity at the societal level which was in turn constructed, reconstructed, and amplified by various political interests in order to induce violent reactions as an expression and demonstration of political power in an environment of social, political and economic repression.

Introduction

1994 ushered in a new era for South Africa. There have never been elections anywhere filled with so much hope, anticipation and uncertainty: Hope for the end of apartheid; hope for a racially inclusive democracy; hope for relief from endemic poverty; and anticipation for improved living conditions. This optimism was tempered by an underlying degree of uncertainty. There was concern that the country might slide deeper into the cauldron of violence and chaos that was so characteristic of the Kwazulu-Natal region throughout the 1980s and early 1990s.

Of all the reasons, ethnicity was the factor most often cited in explaining the rash of violence in Kwazulu and Natal. This opinion has grown in popular discourse and is reinforced by media coverage. It seemed easy and lent itself to journalistic glibness to blame the violence solely on ethnic differences between Zulus and Xhosa; or the historical struggle between two tribes; or because Inkatha is an ethnic organization which mobilizes people on tribal lines or that the ANC is dominated by Xhosa communists who have no respect for Zulu traditional values. Doing so also reinforced the public's perception of the disorder as "black on black" violence and underpinned notions of inherent failings in African behavior.¹ The media was not the only culprit. Various groups of elites and special interests themselves created and exploited ethnic divisions in order to mobilize popular support in their favor. But are

¹Daphna Golan. *Inventing Shaka: Using History in the Construction of Zulu Nationalism* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1995), 5.

these adequate enough explanations? Or do other factors such as economic inequalities, political exclusion, class and gender conflict, and the policies and institutions of apartheid play a role in violence?

The apparent success of the elections and the formation of a government by the African National Congress (ANC) together with its Government of National Unity (GNU) partners did not eliminate serious divisions within South African society. Will ethnicity lose its appeal if economic improvements and political liberalization are successful? Or conversely, will violence continue to destabilize the area even if certain economic and political goals are achieved?

I will argue that the way in which ethnicity was used among the nationalist Zulus during the 1980s and early 1990s was very much a manifestation of an expanded sense of ethnic identity and that new traditions have been invented in order to broaden the concept of Zuluness for political purposes. I contend that what animated Zulu nationalism in the context of contemporary politics resulted from the activities of ethnic entrepreneurs, like Chief A.N.M.G. Buthelezi; and that the corresponding violence was not ethnically based per-se, but primarily the result of elite conflict over power and access to power, as acted out in mass movements like Inkatha. The thrust of my argument is based on the idea that elites manipulate identity for political purposes. But I wish to carry this line of thinking one step further. In order for ethnic rhetoric to be relevant, there must exist among the general population a sense of real or imagined identity that distinguishes them from the *other*. Ethnic

differences, whether real or imagined, have become a useful way for legitimizing violence in the struggle for political power as well as a way to compensate for economic, social and political inequalities.

The existence of ethnic consciousness is a very real phenomena to the inhabitants of Kwazulu-Natal, and despite overall improvements in political, economic and social conditions, ethnicity will likely be used to legitimate violence in pursuit of political goals and economic resources as long as there exist ethnic entrepreneurs to manipulate it. To understand the degree of ethnicity that is characteristic throughout much of Africa, to understand its appeal, it is necessary to understand its historical evolution. Only then can we hope to minimize its destructive tendencies on society.

I have structured the thesis as follows. In the first section, I analyze the concept of ethnicity and attempt to come to grips with its meanings and implications. Part Two details the historical evolution and manipulation of Zulu ethnicity from the 18th century to the present. Part Three examines the effects of: Economic competition; the social upheaval associated with the elimination of apartheid structures; gender issues and the role of men in African society; and in particular *third force theory* in the violence in Kwazulu-Natal. In Part Four, I will examine ethnicity as a product of popular consciousness, existing to some degree in and of itself as a catalyst for violence.

I *Understanding the Concept of Ethnicity*

In order to understand why people react in terms of this phenomenon, we have to

have a clear understanding of what is meant by the term *ethnicity*. Ethnicity is a relatively recent euphemism that has replaced the notion of race and tribe in literature. Ethnicity could be viewed in a broader sense that encompasses or bridges race and culture.² Whereas race (another sociological categorization) is a rigid concept defined by physical traits, ethnicity is situational and is defined more culturally. The fact that it is situational and fluid enables a person to belong to more than one ethnic group.³ Because ethnic identities exist within a changing social environment, their boundaries are flexible. However, groups will tend to differ in the degree of fluidity they are prepared to tolerate.

Gerhard Mare' believes that examining ethnicity involves exploring what is meant by ethnic group and the character or quality that such a social group possesses. People belong to groups because humanity evolved socially; belonging to a group confers social identity. Although society is made up of individuals, it is patterned into distinct groups and categories and people's views, opinions and practices are acquired from the groups to which they belong.⁴ Membership in the group is usually given, not chosen. Identity derives from a birth connection or from acceptance by an ethnic group as if one were born into it.⁵ That is to say, the qualities of a particular

²Saul Dubow, *Ethnic Euphemisms and Racial Echoes*, Journal of Southern African Studies 20 (1994): 357.

³Ibid., 360.

⁴Gerhard Mare, *Ethnicity and Politics in South Africa* (London: Zed Press, 1993), 7.

⁵Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 56.

group are already in existence. At birth, an individual assumes an identity that is already in existence.

Besides obvious kinship groupings and for matters of security, groups exist for several reasons. People form groups for the mutual production of material goods. They also can assist in the struggle against material and structural inequalities. Groups also form around social, psychological, and spiritual matters. And finally, groups form around physical differences which, not too coincidentally, often lead to sexism and racism.⁶ Within groups, similarities are stressed and differences with the *other* are emphasized. Social comparison serves to clarify group boundaries and strengthens social identities. The actual units in a group are not complete human persons but only that portion which conforms to the group's common aspirations. In effect, the group consists of reduced individuals, compounds of personality fragments selected or even created by whatever the group stands for or the idea which they wish to implement.⁷

According to Gerhard Mare', there are several characteristics of an ethnic group. Within each group there exists a sense of cultural affinity.⁸ But how do we know who belongs and who doesn't? Benedict Anderson posits that in large groups, membership and commonality is imagined. Given their size, it is impossible for

⁶Mare, 10.

⁷Siegfried Kraceur, *History: The Last Things Before the Last* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1969), 23.

⁸Mare, 11.

everyone in large groups to know one another as is possible in small groups. Still a sense of affinity develops within this community of *personal* strangers. This is where cultural symbols play an important role. Symbols evolve out of shared language, religion, dress and festivals. The appeal of these symbols operates in lieu of formal structures thanks to their emotive nature. Emotional appeal ultimately stresses security and familiarity.⁹ Over time, these symbols can be added to, invented or reinterpreted. The particular self-image or identification held also depends on time, place and circumstance. Thus, social identity involves both an historical and social context. The self is both lasting and static yet at the same time changing as outside factors demand new responses.

Ethnic groups have a sense of history in that their origins give coherence and legitimacy to their existence in the present.¹⁰ In other words, the past legitimates the ethnic group by providing precedence and lending continuity to its existence. The past also serves to set the boundaries and criteria for belonging to the group as well as criteria for exclusion from the group.¹¹ Furthermore the past enables action based on precedents set earlier. The past provides a romanticized model for the static present as well as a call to mobilization by appealing to past achievements. And finally, the past serves to legitimate existing structures of power and authority.¹²

⁹Mare, 12.

¹⁰Ibid., 14.

¹¹Ibid., 15.

¹²Ibid., 17.

Another characteristic of an ethnic group is that there is an identity that sets the group apart from others.¹³ The legitimacy of any group depends upon its own uniqueness. Differences often revolve around notions of superiority and inferiority, though not always. Groups do not exist alone. There must exist groups of *others* in order for groups to exist. This establishes the group's position vis-a-vis the *other*.

By being associated with cultural attributes, it would seem that ethnicity should be more accommodating than race which is based on physical attributes. Yet ethnic cultural markers have been imbued with a sense of primordialism that has achieved biological intensity. This was evident in the precepts of apartheid and the notion of the great Zulu nation of Buthelezi. The line of logic that idealized the alignment of ethnicity, culture and political and geographical coherence provided a powerful means for staking territorial claims in Kwazulu. The same logic could be used to explain violence as a natural expression of primordial ethnic differences.¹⁴

Ethnicity is, therefore, more than a definitional concept invented to give credibility to an endless variety of group identities and manipulations. Ethnicity refers to social identity and is dependent upon culturally specific practices and symbols; a belief in a common history and origin; and a sense of belonging to a group which confirms some sort of social identity apart from the *other*. Ultimately, ethnicity refers to both the call addressed to ethnic subjects to mobilize them and

¹³Mare, 20.

¹⁴Rob Nixon, *Of Balkans and Bantustans*, Transitions 60: 6.

defines how they will respond.¹⁵ The recent violence in South Africa concerns just such a battle over symbols, representations of the past and the reconstruction of Zulu history between supporters of Inkatha and those of the African National Congress (ANC), and among people who have very little and are fighting over minimal basic resources. Ethnicity exists regardless of any scientific validity. It exists in the hearts and minds of the inhabitants of South Africa as much as it exists elsewhere. And this is all that really matters in establishing the reality of its existence. Now that I have established a definitional concept of ethnicity, I would like to begin by examining the historical events surrounding the creation of Zulu ethnicity.

II

Zulu History and the Manipulation of Identity

a. 18th and 19th Centuries

In order to understand Zulu nationalism and the resultant violence in Kwazulu-Natal today, one has to understand the historical beginnings of the Zulu kingdom. It is also important to point out that history is used by different people for different purposes and effects. Not all Zulus use their history the same way. Inkatha did not invent Zulu nationalism and the party has used images of the past that predate its formation. Although Inkatha has mastered the manipulation of the Zulu past, Zulu history was also used by colonists, missionaries, the leaders of the African petty bourgeoisie, the Zulu royal family and individual novelists and film makers to serve their own ends. Such people have had their own reasons to manipulate Zulu history

¹⁵Mare, 23.

so as to present the Zulu kingdom as a united and homogenous empire.¹⁶

What were the origins and who could refer to themselves as Zulu? It can be safely argued that by the mid-18th century, inhabitants of present day southeast Africa lived in numerous, small scale political units which varied in size. Politically, they varied from chiefdoms in which the ruling chief exercised managerial or ritual authority over the people who recognized this and paid him tribute, to aggregations of chiefdoms in which the dominant chief's power was based on his ability to apply or employ physical force and superior organization. Paramountcies formed when one chief was able to subordinate another through conquest, through manipulating rights to local resources or through extending control over strategic points on trading routes. Subordinate chiefs still had a degree of autonomy within this system, but had to pay tribute to the paramount chief.¹⁷ Chiefdoms were made up of fluctuating numbers of communities which were themselves composed of shifting numbers of households. Cross-cutting neighborhood, kinship, marriage and clientship ties operated to bond communities. Overall, chiefdoms and communities were generally fluid and unstable entities. This instability is indicative of the degree of the lack of centralized authority.¹⁸

By the late 18th century, there was a decisive shift in social and political patterns

¹⁶Golan, 7.

¹⁷John Wright and Carolyn Hamilton, *The Phongolo-Mzimkhulu Region in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*, in Natal and Zululand from the Earliest Times to 1910, ed. Andrew Duminy and Bill Guests (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1989), 59.

¹⁸Ibid., 58.

in the region. In several locations between Delago Bay and the Thukela River, the process of political centralization and geographic expansion was occurring.¹⁹ The cause for these changes has been debated. The most likely cause was the influx of international trade into the region. The demand for ivory and slaves significantly affected parts of Africa starting around this period. Ivory, which had no intrinsic value to Africans, was greatly valued by Europeans. In order to keep up with the demand, chiefdoms had to search ever enlarging territories as elephant herds became scarce. Large hunting parties and trading caravans required many men for portage. As chiefdoms expanded their range, they encroached on other neighboring chiefdom's territories inciting conflict. They also had to deal with security issues like banditry. To cope with the hazards, chiefs used *amabatho* in order to further their aims. *Amabatho* is a term that refers to circumcision schools which were periodically formed when the chief banded together a number of young men, all of the same general age and drawn from groups which recognized his authority for the purpose of inducting them to the rites of manhood. Given the growth in the demand for ivory and other commodities, the chiefs turned these ambathu into armies to be used against one another. The expansion of the internal scope of the authority of the chiefs was thus paralleled by the expansion of chiefdoms' geographical span, with the increasingly militarized ambathu now serving more and more often in the capacity of

¹⁹Wright and Hamilton, *The Phongolo-Mzimkhulu Region*, 60.

armies and police forces.²⁰ Over time, increasing inequalities between and within societies, coupled with a series of environmental crises at the beginning of the nineteenth century, transformed longstanding competition over natural resources and trade in south-eastern Africa into a violent struggle for dominance and survival.²¹ Chiefdoms such as the Mthethwa and the Ndwande expanded in both size and power and increasingly clashed with one another and their neighbors. It is thought that they clashed over the control of the ivory and perhaps the slave trade in the Delago Bay region.²² As conflicts enlarged, they spilled over as smaller chiefdoms were incorporated into larger ones, either voluntarily or through conquest. Some chiefdoms expanded their power to offset the Mthethwa and the Ndwande while others simply fled.²³ This growing conflict is thought to have precipitated political change in the Thukela-Mzimkhulu region.²⁴

Zulu identity, whether real or imagined, has complex origins that trace back to the early 19th century. The Zulu clan can trace its origins back to Malandela. Although the identity of specific individuals doesn't really matter, identity places a

²⁰Wright and Hamilton, *The Phongolo-Mzimkhulu Region*, 63.

²¹Elizabeth A. Eldredge, *Sources of Conflict in Southern Africa c.1800-1830: The Mfecane Reconsidered*, in The Mfecane Aftermath: Reconstructive Debates in Southern African History, ed. Carolyn Hamilton (Witwatersrand: University of Natal Press, 1995), 123.

²²John Wright, *Political Transformations in the Thukela-Mzimkhulu Region in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*, in The Mfecane Aftermath: Reconstructive Debates in Southern African History, ed. Carolyn Hamilton (Witwatersrand: University of Natal Press, 1995), 165-66.

²³Ibid., 168.

²⁴Ibid., 165.

human face on history and aids in understanding of the creation of history along with aiding in the understanding of how people comprehend their own origins. Herein ultimately rests the roots of a person's social identity. Identifying individuals also emphasizes that the earliest Zulus were simply a clan of Nguni peoples as were so many others throughout the region. Although little is known of Malandela, oral histories reveal that he had five sons: Ntombela Zulu; Zulu Nkosinkuly; Nkosinkulu Mageba; Mageba Phunga and Phunga Ndaba. Here we find early references to the name Zulu. Of the five sons, Phunga Ndaba had a son named Jama. It was Jama who had the son Senzangakhona who would ultimately father Shaka.²⁵

Part of understanding the Zulu myth entails understanding late 19th century versions of Shaka's purported origins and his upbringing. Although there are variations in the story, there seem to be threads of commonality linking the different versions. Shaka's birth apparently was a result of the union between a young prince named Senzangakhona of the Zulu clan and a young woman named Nandi, a princess of the Mbhengi clan.²⁶ His early years were spent with his mother and her clan.²⁷ At some point in time, conflict developed between Shaka and the son of the chief. This is when Shaka's relationship with Dingiswayo, chief of the Mthethwa began. Fearing that he would be killed, Shaka's grandmother spirited him away to Mthethwa where

²⁵Mangema Fuze, *The Black People and Whence They Came* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1979), 43.

²⁶C. deB. Webb and John Wright, eds., *The James Stuart Archives, Volume IV* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1987), 202.

²⁷Fuze, 45.

Dingiswayo ruled. It was under the supervision of Dingiswayo that Shaka matured and purportedly learned his skills as a fighter.²⁸ At some point in time, the Zulu chief Senzangakhona visited Dingiswayo. In some versions of history he is described as searching for another wife. Other versions describe him wanting to visit the young man Shaka whom he hadn't seen since birth. Nevertheless, he apparently became fatally ill shortly following this visit. Also this is when it became clear that Dingiswayo wanted to install Shaka as the Zulu chief, to be used as yet another agent of Mthethwa power. Shaka too wanted to assume the Zulu chieftaincy, but Senzangakhona had already promised it to his other son Nomkwayimba.²⁹

Then a dramatic series of events took place that had a profound impact on the peoples of the region. Shaka apparently returned to Zululand and killed his half-brother, Nomkwayimba in order to guarantee his claim as heir to the Zulu throne. Dingiswayo of Mthethwa led an army and attacked the Ndwande in the continuing struggle between them. He himself was captured and killed by Zwide, chief of the Ndwande.³⁰ One mythical version of Zulu history has it that Dingiswayo foretold of Shaka's rise and that he knew that he would be killed by Zwide and that his own death would set into motion this prophecy of Shaka's rise to power in the region. Nevertheless, whether prophesized or not, this event destroyed the loosely structured

²⁸Webb and Wright, eds., 203.

²⁹Fuze, 45.

³⁰Wright, *Political Transformations*, 169.

Mthethwa federation and confirmed the Ndwande as the dominant power in the region. Shaka then became the Zulu chief following the death of Senzangakhona.³¹

Threatened by the Ndwande himself, Shaka was able to cajole his neighbors through political manipulation and military threats to form an alliance against the Ndwande.³² Shaka was able to marshall the Zulu, the Mthethwa and the Hlubi (among others) against the Ndwande. The Ndwande, already weakened because of both internal conflict and their having overextended themselves deep into Zulu territory were eventually defeated in a series of military initiatives by the Zulu forces. It was during this time that use of short jabbing spears supplanted the use of throwing spears. Adaption of these weapons was advantageous in the broken terrain near the Mhlathuze river in the heart of Zulu territory. The demise of the Ndwande could thus be seen as the result of internal conflict and stress and the rise of Zulu power.³³

But instead of the war ending, Shaka continued his campaign against neighboring clans.³⁴ Shaka consolidated and secured his southern and western frontiers, causing dislocations as peoples migrated to other areas to avoid being assimilated by the Zulus.³⁵ So continued the *Mfecane* or crushing of peoples in the region. One by one, clans succumbed to Shaka's political power and military might: The Ngwane,

³¹Fuze, 46-7.

³²Wright, *Political Transformations*, 169.

³³Ibid., 170.

³⁴Fuze, 50.

³⁵Wright, *Political Transformations*, 175.

Nacingwane, Qwabe, Mzilikazi and the Nomagaga to name a few.

During this time, few groups would have considered themselves Zulu. In order to be called Zulu, one had to be related to the Zulu clan. Additionally, Shaka had to rely on the cooperation of other chiefs in order to control his expanding kingdom. The question which has nagged historians and others is why Shaka expanded his kingdom through military conquest. Also why did many neighboring clans cooperate with him and accommodate his ambitions? Was there a proto-nationalistic identity developing among the peoples of the region during this period characterized by the consolidation of groups into large aggregations or proto-nations, or was the Mfecane a response to the realities of changing economics and environmental conditions? Cultural entrepreneurs like Chief A.N.M.G. Buthelezi surely support the former view. The problem remains how to gauge this. Others could surely dispute the Buthelezi with a surprising precision.

One can only speculate on Shaka's motivations. Maybe Shaka was driven by pathological ambitions for personal power and prestige that often consumes many political autocrats. Anthropologists like Max Gluckman and writers such as E.A. Ritter suggest that Shaka was driven by personality defects relating back to problems in his childhood. This coupled with his military aptitude could surely account for some of his actions. The combination of military ambition and ruthlessness, along with effective control of the means of wealth, was sufficient to coopt neighboring peoples during a period of increased competition for control over cattle, trade and

subjects.³⁶

Other explanations center on external factors such as increased trade, economic consolidation, environmental and population pressures. Although such explanations involving economics and the control of trade are plausible and undoubtedly played a significant role, they assume that all developments in the region were simply driven by European intrusion and trade, thus denying that Africans had a role in the process of consolidation. They also assume that all of Shaka's actions were rationally calculated. They ignore the human factor and this is where notions of nationalism fit into the picture. Perhaps there was a sense of developing nationalism during this period. Anthropologists suggest many reasons for why people fight. Among them are feelings of nationalism or the development of an identity that sets people *apart* or defines the *other*. Defining the enemy is crucial in setting the stage for the competition over cattle, women and territory. The whole idea of regiments based on age sets could surely foster nationalism, or at least an overarching loyalty to a monarch. The amabatho often separated young men from their homes for long periods of time. The amabatho were made up of young men from a wide range of territories and were based in royal garrisons. One could safely speculate that in amabatho, individuals' loyalties often shifted from the clan to the regiment to which they belonged and ultimately to the idea of the Zulu kingdom.

It has also been shown that another reason men fight is to win acceptance among

³⁶Wright, *Political Transformations*, 173.

their peers. Often, men fight and die out of loyalty to their peers. This is something difficult to rationally explain but is nevertheless important in understanding Zulu nationalism. Such were the origins of the Zulu Kingdom under Shaka.

b. The Middle Period: 1828-1920

In September 1828 Shaka was murdered by his two half brothers and his personal assistant at his Dukoza homestead.³⁷ During this period, the amabatho were away fighting in an unpopular campaign against the Soshangane. Dingane and Mhlangana recognized both Shaka's vulnerability and the general air of discontent among the amabatho over a series of drawn-out and successive military campaigns; thus political circumstances tended to favor their action.³⁸ Dingane became king and received initial support from tributary peoples in the western part of the kingdom. Upon their return, the regiments also accepted the succession, though with some ambivalence. Despite tensions, such acceptance reflected the acquired, widespread legitimacy of the Zulu monarchy at the political, economic and ideological levels.³⁹ This in turn suggests the extent to which greater identities had supplanted, or were supplanting, clan loyalties in the struggle for political change. Shaka's assassination and Dingane's subsequent succession represented a dynastic rebellion more than a popular rebellion. The general population remained loyal to the institution of the monarchy, not the monarch.

³⁷Peter Colenbrander, *The Zulu Kingdom, 1828-79*, in Natal and Zululand from the Earliest Times to 1910, eds. Andrew Duminey and Bill Guests (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1989), 83.

³⁸Ibid., 84.

³⁹Carolyn Hamilton, *The Amalala in Natal, 1750-1826* (Unpublished paper, Department of History, University of Witwatersrand, 1982), 5.

Throughout the mid-1800s, white settler influence was minimal and the Zulus benefitted equally from trade contacts. Whereas Shaka seemed to have been accepted and tolerated by the various European traders and visa-versa, Dingane was portrayed negatively by the early settlers, largely a result of the Retief massacre. Dingane also ruled ruthlessly and dealt with any threat to state security with force.⁴⁰ He continued employing the amabatho, more to keep them busy than to counter any perceived military threat.

This period was characterized by an expanding settler presence: The Portuguese at Delagoa Bay; the English trading/missionary settlement in Natal; and various Voortrekker settlements. Fearing Dingane's ruthlessness, many Zulus fled south to seek protection among white settlements in and around Natal. Among these refugees was Mpande, Dingane's brother. In January 1840, Mpande led an army of some 17,000 disenfranchised Zulu and a handful of Boers and defeated Dingane's army. Dingane was put to death in Swaziland and Mpande became king of the Zulu.⁴¹ But many Zulu viewed Mpande as unworthy and cowardly, particularly among the amabatho, who relied on booty collected during raids on neighboring peoples. Like his predecessor, Mpande relied upon the institution of kingship that had acquired widespread acceptance. He continued to enroll amabatho, to control marriages, to officiate at national ceremonies and otherwise fulfilled kingly functions. He also

⁴⁰Colenbrander, *The Zulu Kingdom*, 85.

⁴¹Ibid., 93-4.

controlled other members of the ruling lineage who might otherwise serve as rallying points for rebellion.⁴² At the same time, this period was characterized by increasing tensions between the Zulus and the settler colony in Natal because Mpande allowed a group of Boers to establish an independent republic within Zululand.

In 1856, a power struggle ensued between Mpande and his two sons, Cetshwayo and Mbuyazi over succession. Also the amabatho became increasingly disaffected because Mpande was not as militarily active as his predecessors. Thus there were fewer spoils of conquest to go around. Furthermore, there was a drought during this period and Mpande deferred a promised age set demobilization further disaffecting the amabatho. Cetshwayo defeated Mbuyazi in a crucial war in 1856, and forced his father to accept a power sharing arrangement. In 1872 Mpande died and Cetshwayo formally became king. Like his predecessors, Cetshwayo relied upon the institution of kingship for his legitimization. He appointed new chiefs, he enforced the marriage regulations of the amabatho and he began a new round of campaigning against the Swazi to the east.⁴³

Immediately during his rule, Cetshwayo was confronted by the effects of the discovery of diamonds in Griqualand West in the late 1860s.⁴⁴ This discovery significantly intensified capitalist development throughout the region. Previously

⁴²Colenbrander, *The Zulu King*, 97.

⁴³Ibid., 108.

⁴⁴Ibid., 107.

viewed by the British as a useful check to Boer expansion by the British, the Zulus were suddenly regarded as an obstacle to confederation.

The confederation plan developed by the Colonial Office after the discovery of minerals in the area could not be realized as long as the Zulu kingdom still existed. In 1879, the British army invaded Zululand on a mission to end Zulu independence. In an event that is central to the conception of Zulu nationalism, the initial British incursion into Zululand at Isandlwana was soundly defeated by the Zulu army. But after a later battle at Ulundi, the British ultimately claimed military victory. In fact, the Zulus quit fighting after the British promised that they would retain possession of their land; a promise later broken. Following the Zulu defeat, the British exiled Cetshwayo and divided the Zulu kingdom into thirteen parts, each headed by an appointed chief.

Once the Zulu were defeated, the process of assimilation into South African political structures began. Their culture and heritage became a focus of intense British interest. The war and the victory at Isandlwana, events covered thoroughly in the popular press, brought the Zulu to the center of public attention in Europe.⁴⁵ This was when the Zulu gained their reputation for military prowess among both Europeans and the latter Zulu nationalists. The breakup of the Zulu kingdom into separate parts and the memory of the British defeat in effect watered the seeds of Zulu nationalism which were planted earlier by the likes of Shaka. After annexation

⁴⁵Golan, 51.

to Natal, heavier taxes and labor demands, crop seizures and land destruction led to the final Zulu resistance during the Bambatha Rebellion in 1906. This last armed Zulu resistance raised the specter to the British and Natalians of a revived Zulu threat. The rebellion of Chief Bambatha of the Greytown district drew the full wrath of the colonial and settler authorities because of fears it would lead to the consolidation of resistance under the Zulu King Dinuzulu. The British troops massacred between 3000 and 4000 of Bambatha's followers with machine guns in the Nkandala forests.⁴⁶ This is when we see the first use of Zulu symbols as a rallying point for popular resistance. The *other*, in keeping with Mare's definition were now the white colonists, their ideals and their institutions, instead of neighboring clans. The European's inability to subdue the Zulu militarily until the early 20th century would serve to leave a legacy of unconsolidated land occupied by Africans, the symbols of continuity, resistance and apparent Zulu political and cultural coherence that would be used by subsequent regional leaders.

c. Early 20th Century

Zulu ethnicity expanded as a result of events which occurred beginning in the 1890s. During most of the history of the Zulu kingdom, few of its members would have considered themselves to be Zulu. Until the time of Cetshwayo, people inside the kingdom applied this term solely to the Zulu descent group. After the crushing British defeat in 1879, the kingdom crumbled. The settlement with the British which

⁴⁶Gerhard Mare and Georgina Hamilton, *An Appetite For Power: Buthelezi's Inkatha and the Politics of Loyal Resistance*. (Johannesburg: Raven Press, 1987), 18-19.

followed saw the Zulu king exiled, the army disbanded, and the territories partitioned among thirteen chiefs.⁴⁷

From the 1890s onward, the rapid growth of migrant labor from rural areas of Natal and Zululand to towns like Durban and Johannesburg also served to foster the development among African men of an overarching generic identity.⁴⁸ As a result of living in work camps and hostels many miles from their families for great lengths of time, Zulu ethnic identification came to supplant more traditional kinship ties. This correlates nicely with Horowitz's opinion that ethnic identities are simply kin-like relations extended.

Labor migrations also threatened the social and economic powers of rural chiefs. Besides tearing away the social fabric around which the chiefdoms was formed, young men who migrated were able to acquire their own wealth instead of having to rely on the patronage of the chief. Reduced clientelism undermined the authority of chiefs in a society where the number of clients a man possessed positively correlated to the amount of power he had. Hence, faced with the threats that migrant labor posed to their authority, the rural chiefs were prepared to strike an alliance with the heirs to the Zulu royal house in order to strengthen their position. Thus Zulu ethnic identity appealed to the traditional chiefs who felt that their power was being undermined.

⁴⁷Carolyn Hamilton and John Wright, *Ethnicity, History and the Limits of Imagination* (Paper presented to the Conference on Ethnicity, Identity and Nationalism in South Africa: Comparative Perspectives, Grahamstown, 1993), 6.

⁴⁸Ibid., 12.

The core of the Zulu royal family realized that to survive all these historic upheavals, they needed the support from the ranks of the mission-educated Africans known as *amakholwa*. These comprised a distinct social category also referred to by later historians as the *petit bourgeoisie*.⁴⁹ The 1913 Natives Land Act, Native Administration Bill of 1917 and the Native Administration Act of 1920 were detrimental to this aspiring class of landowners. This legislation restricted the purchase of land by Africans outside their reserves. This, coupled with the growing militancy of South Africa's labor movement, compelled the merchant class to seek an alliance with the more conservative elements of African society, namely the rural chiefs and the Zulu royal house. The Zulu royal house was eager to reestablish its political ascendancy over its former subjects and Africans south of the kingdom in Natal. In 1924, this conservative alliance between Zulu royals, rural chiefs and the *petit bourgeoisie* fused to form the first *Inkatha*. Thus the spread of Zuluism also has to be viewed from an economic and political perspective. The economic and social effects of labor migrancy, the economic aspirations of the *petit bourgeoisie* and the political aspirations of Zulu royals were important elements in the subsequent manipulation by elites and intellectuals of popular consciousness where a common identity was potentially beneficial to them, as well as to the broader population.⁵⁰ Ironically, this cooperation benefited the South African state as much as it did the

⁴⁹Nicholas Cope, *The Zulu Petit Bourgeoisie and Zulu Nationalism in the 1920s: Origins of Inkatha*, Journal of Southern African Studies 16 (1990): 431.

⁵⁰Hamilton and Wright, 16.

Zulu elites. It is important to acknowledge the role of the South African state in this process. The heightened political militancy of African labor in the later 1920s, particularly in Durban and rural Natal, led the architects of segregation to perceive the utility of ethnic based organizations for diffusing class based organizations and class consciousness.⁵¹ Furthermore, the government was interested in controlling the urbanization of workers. It hoped to combat urbanization by restricting Africans to reserves except when employed in the cities. By promoting and exploiting ethnicity the government hoped to make its native reserve policy more palatable.

d. 1951 to Present

Thus far, we have seen how certain interests have manipulated Zulu ethnicity in order to further their own agendas. Until 1951, Zuluness was more a cultural phenomenon associated with social and economic benefits than a political phenomenon. It wasn't until the time of Chief A.N.M.G Buthelezi that Zulu nationalism received a politicized cast. Between 1951 and 1968 as he battled to assume a position of power within Zulu politics, Buthelezi relied upon Zulu history to assert his historic right to rule.

After their victory in 1948, Dr. Malan and the National Party idealogues envisioned a system of governmental institutions for Africans in the context of reserves which would permit them to have a large degree of self-government thus

⁵¹Shula Marks, *Patriotism, Patriarchy and Purity: Natal and the Politics of Zulu Ethnic Consciousness, The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa* in *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*, ed. Leroy Vail (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 217.

enabling them to retain their own national character. In 1951, the passage of the Bantu Authorities Act abolished the Native Representative Council as an umbrella organization representing all Africans and substituted instead a system of tribal authorities based on various chiefs in rural areas. This had the effect of abolishing an organization where at least all Africans had token representation at the national level and in effect, turned the clock back by dividing them along ethnic lines thereby denying a united voice on issues of national unity and liberation.⁵²

In 1951, Buthelezi worked as a clerk in the office of Bantu Administration under apartheid idealogues H. F. Verwoerd and W. M. Eislen. This period was characterized by a young and relatively powerless chief struggling to carve out a niche for himself in Zulu politics. He declared his historic right to wield power in Zulu politics, and fought for as much power as he could in the context of the South African government's Bantustan policies. In order to accomplish this, he needed to establish his credibility with three audiences: The Buthelezi tribe and those falling under the jurisdiction of the Bantu Authorities Act in Zululand; the South African government; and the African National Congress (ANC), of which he had briefly been a Youth League member and which became a strong mass organization in the 1950s.

In the context of this struggle for power Buthelezi developed a political discourse which utilized Zulu history as a legitimizing ideology. The government's promotion of Zulu ethnicity through its homeland policies during this period made it relatively

⁵²Mzala, *Gatsha Buthelezi, Chief With a Double Agenda*, (London: Zed Press, 1988), 48-49.

easy for Buthelezi to draw Zulu ethnic history into this discourse. Furthermore, the ANC's use of the same history for the purposes of opposing these homeland policies enabled him to adopt a rhetoric similar to that of the ANC.⁵³

Shaka became a powerful symbol around which potential Zulu ethnic support was mobilized. By involving himself in the first Shaka Day celebration in 1954, Buthelezi sought to portray himself as a traditionalist and a supporter of the monarchy. At this first celebration, Zulu Paramount Chief Cyprian appeared dressed in a symbolic costume that no previous Zulu monarch had ever worn, in effect creating a *new and ancient tradition*.⁵⁴ By grasping the significance of Shaka as an historical symbol of Zulu ethnic and political unity, Buthelezi successfully associated himself with the royal clan as a way to enhance his own political ambitions. At his installation as chief in 1957, Buthelezi claimed that his genealogy linked him directly to previous Zulu kings and that this fact made him a legitimate competitor for political power in Zululand although this assumption was challenged by many including his own brother Mceleli who argued that Buthelezi was not the rightful chief but was instead imposed by the Minister of Native Authorities.⁵⁵ Buthelezi's goal was to revive the cultural organization of *Inkatha* as a way to restore Zulu national consciousness and pride, but this attempt failed when Zulu Paramount Chief Cyprian withdrew his support under

⁵³Paul Forsyth, *The Past in the Service of the Present: A political Use of History by Chief A.N.M.G. Buthelezi 1951-91*, South African Historical Journal 26 (1992): 76.

⁵⁴David Chidester, *Shots in the Streets: Violence and Religion in South Africa*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), 15.

⁵⁵Forsyth, 77.

pressure from the South African government. Overall, Buthelezi was successful in depicting the idea of the Zulu nation in order to mobilize Zulu ethnic unity which he could in-turn politically exploit.

By this time, Buthelezi was interpreting Zulu and Afrikaaner history in such a way as to assert his own claims for power before his Bantustan constituency and the South African government.⁵⁶ Following the death of Paramount Chief Cyprian in 1968, Buthelezi vigorously asserted his right to represent the Zulu people, even though there was a new king, Goodwill Zwelethini. Through a series of astute political moves, Buthelezi managed to assume the position of Chief Executive Officer of the newly established Zulu Territorial Authority in 1970 and by 1972, managed to bar the king (Goodwill Zwelithini) from political activities, claiming that Zulu kings historically had been symbolic leaders rather than active political figures. By depriving the king of political power within the context of Zulu politics, Buthelezi emerged as the chief spokesman for what was now referred to as the Zulu nation and that by doing so, assumed the role of custodian of Zulu national history and culture.⁵⁷ His position was further enhanced by the establishment of Kwazulu as a Bantu homeland in 1972 which gave Zulu cultural nationalism a legitimate territorial base and Buthelezi powerful material resources and patronage.⁵⁸

⁵⁶Forsyth, 78.

⁵⁷Ibid., 80.

⁵⁸Shula Marks, *Origins of Ethnic Violence*, in Occasional Paper No. 3, Institutions, Culture and Change at Local Level, ed. Preben Kaarholm. Paper presented as part of a researcher training course at Sandbjerg Manor, Roskilde, Denmark, 25-30 November 1990, 41.

As Chief Minister, Buthelezi continued to deploy mythic and ritual instruments of symbolic power to reinforce his political movement. During this period Buthelezi attempted to create a public awareness of the existence of a Zulu ethnic nationalism. To accomplish this, he referred to historical examples which seemed to support his arguments for the re-establishment of the Zulu nation as it existed in pre-colonial times. He placed great stress on traditional virtues embodied in the *Ubunthu-Botho* (Good Citizenship) school syllabus. This was appealing because it played upon generational and gender issues. It stressed discipline and obedience from the youth and deference from Zulu women in society. It provided an ethnic ideology and social order calculated to appeal to older men from the rural areas who felt threatened and alienated by the corrupting ways of town and disrespectful youth.⁵⁹

After 1972, Buthelezi began to aspire to national political leadership. He commenced to presenting himself to a national audience as an African nationalist political leader. To his Zulu Bantustan constituency, he continued to articulate a national ethnic ideology. To an increasing number of militant adherents of the black consciousness movement, he presented himself as an African nationalist in the tradition of the ANC.⁶⁰ To appeal to a national audience, he launched *Inkatha* in 1975 and just being Zulu automatically made you a member.⁶¹ Inkatha as an

⁵⁹Marks, *Ethnic Violence*, 43.

⁶⁰Forsyth, 82.

⁶¹Chidester, 15.

organization forced itself into the sphere of worldview negotiations by asserting its domination over all symbolic and ideological discourse within the region. Buthelezi claimed that the roots of black consciousness and the ANC rested in Zulu history. Inkatha leaders presented their organization as a continuation of the ANC after a fifteen year lull and even used ANC colors and symbols. Inkatha claimed that it was founded in response to the political vacuum that had been created when the ANC was banned in 1960, and that it was founded on the principles of the founding fathers of the ANC.⁶² Thus Buthelezi launched Inkatha as a Zulu-based movement with the ANC's blessings.

However, popular uprisings in 1976 and the corresponding wave of radicalism and militancy that emerged detracted from Buthelezi's popular support. Consequently by 1978, he had switched his rhetoric to assert a multi-ethnic history for South Africa which promoted an historically derived, multi-ethnic political union under the banner of the ANC, with Inkatha as its internal representative and embodiment.⁶³ But by 1979, following meetings with ANC officials in London, which were characterized by disagreement and antagonism, Buthelezi finally split with the ANC.

The split with the ANC and his political isolation from the black consciousness movement forced Buthelezi to return to a reliance on his Bantustan constituency and to his ethnic Zulu discourse. Again he shifted his rhetoric claiming that the ANC no

⁶²Mare, 58.

⁶³Forsyth, 85.

longer truly represented the ideals of its founders and that Inkatha was the true embodiment of the original ANC. His intention was to reclaim the traditions of resistance from the ANC and credit himself with them. But by 1983, anti-apartheid resistance had begun to assume a populist character which in-turn threatened Buthelezi's support base in Kwazulu-Natal. The formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF) as an internal wing of the ANC challenged Buthelezi's version of history which denied the ANC a tradition of resistance. They condemned Buthelezi's pretentious claims to Zulu royalty and his deployment of authority to appropriate the history of African resistance. The ANC claimed that:

"Gatsha Buthelezi drapes himself in the finery of the glorious traditions of resistance which were the hallmark of the great patriots of the past, whose attributes, victories and titles he appropriated by a process of usurpation and for a different cause. The true link between the wars of resistance of earlier times and modern endeavors to grapple with the enemy is symbolized not by the leopard skin regalia often worn by those whom the apartheid regime allows to address meetings, but by continued loyalty to the ideals of the total and genuine liberation of South Africa and all the sacrifices that such a stand entails."⁶⁴

With his close ties to business, Buthelezi was particularly angered by the emergence of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), an ANC based trade union in Natal in 1985. Violence in the region escalated as a result.⁶⁵ Authenticity and resistance were negotiated in terms of the spiritual politics of sacred history. But it was also contested through violent negotiations of killing in intense

⁶⁴Chidester, 156.

⁶⁵Marks, *Ethnic Violence*, 42.

conflicts that swept through the Natal region. Consequently, Kwazulu and Natal became the epicenter for violence. Buthelezi justified the violence as the *birth pangs* of the Zulu nation being reborn after its defeat by the British in 1879. The conflict represented an *explosive cycle* in history which would be followed by the birth of the Zulu nation.⁶⁶

This was a period of regional consolidation characterized by further blatant and dangerous ethnic and political mobilization; structural integration of the Kwazulu Bantustan and Natal Provincial Administration; drafting of blueprints of regional reform through the Buthelezi Commission and the Indaba and defining the enemy in ever clearer terms.⁶⁷ For Inkatha, the enemy included not only political opponents, but Zulus who rejected the version of politicized ethnicity that the Inkatha leadership preached. These mostly urban blacks were politically aligned with the ANC. Now challenged within his own Kwazulu constituency by the UDF and the COSATU, Buthelezi sought to shore up his support by strengthening his alliances with local political and business interests and suggested the establishment of a unified federal government system for the region. These alliances provided Buthelezi with a possible substitute for his waning popular based support. Buthelezi and Inkatha argued that this regional style of government was the logical extension of Zulu national solidarity as originally envisioned by Shaka.

⁶⁶Forsyth, 91.

⁶⁷Mare, 60.

After the unbanning of the ANC in 1990, Buthelezi urged chiefs in Natal and KwaZulu to *exercise their authority* in their communities in the interest of asserting Zulu national unity.⁶⁸ Even at the Shaka Day celebration in 1990, the King himself warned dissenting Zulu chiefs that Inkatha members would find them and kill them.⁶⁹ This was clearly a direct call to discipline anti-Inkatha forces. In 1990, Inkatha proposed to meet with the ANC at Ulindi, the site of Zulu victory in 1879 against the British, to discuss a peaceful resolution to the conflict. The ANC in turn suggested another location citing that Ulindi was not a neutral location and feared that a meeting there would only serve to legitimate a rival political organization based on ethnic nationalism. Inkatha responded by cancelling the meeting claiming that ANC leadership had insulted the king.⁷⁰

In July 1990, Inkatha became known as the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) in an attempt to reclaim its prominence in national politics. Violence between ANC and IFP supporters spiraled despite public agreements between Buthelezi and Nelson Mandela to end the violence as the Zulu people now had to choose among competing loyalties and contrasting definitions of Zuluness.⁷¹

⁶⁸Forsyth, 92.

⁶⁹Chidester, 15.

⁷⁰Ibid., 157.

⁷¹Georgina Hamilton and Gerhard Mare, *The Inkatha Freedom Party in Election '94 South Africa*, ed. Andrew Reynolds (London: James Currey, 1994), 79.

III

The Environment

I now want to focus on the economic and social climate that existed in the region during the time of the greatest violence. Perhaps by understanding these conditions, one can understand how Buthelezi was easily able to camouflage his political ambitions behind the veils of Zulu nationalism and the promise of a better day. Why were the nationalist calls of Buthelezi and others adhered to with such violent zeal by some groups in Kwazulu-Natal?

South African society was tainted by a culture of violence which existed at every level of society. During this period, comrades, kitskonstables, vigilantes, death squads and warlords were part of the South African landscape and vocabulary. Shula Marks argued that ethnic interpretations of the violence in South Africa fail to address the fact that the majority of the 6,000 or so people killed in the province of Natal during the period 1987-1993 died as a result of inter-Zulu feuds between members of Inkatha and those aligned with its political opponents, COSATU, UDF and the ANC after 1990.⁷² Marks blamed the violence on recession, political uncertainty and the lifting of restraints on urbanization which led to excessive male competition for limited jobs, women and territory. The increasing flow of migrants to the cities after the lifting of influx controls created new social tensions and economic struggles in townships and in informal squatter settlements which meshed

⁷²Marks, *Ethnic Violence*, 25.

with political rivalries.⁷³ A particular cause of conflict on the Rand was the tension between migrant hostel dwellers, (many from Inkatha-dominated rural Natal) and local township residents. This tension was heightened by unemployment and fuelled by ethnic mobilization by Inkatha. Violence was a response to unstable social conditions.⁷⁴ Thus, according to Marks, apartheid was the principle source and form of violence because of the stress it generated through large scale, systematic destruction of family life due to migrant labor, the uprooting and relocation of whole communities and the very violent fabric of daily life in the mine compounds.⁷⁵

It could be said that men treated as animals will behave as animals; life in the mine compounds approximated such conditions. Miners had to work and live in often intolerable conditions characterized by ethnic segregation. This served to increase tensions between groups and sharpened divisions among them based on ethnic ties. Whenever there were labor problems at the mines, the popular media portrayed it as factional fighting due to innate tribal animosities, further reinforcing popular perception on the nature of the violence.⁷⁶

The destruction of family life through migrant labor has been important in the

⁷³H. Sapire, *Politics and Protest in Shack Settlements of the Pretoria- Witwatersrand-Vereeniging Region, South Africa, 1980-1990*, Journal of Southern African Studies 18, 686.

⁷⁴Lauren Segal, *The Human Face of Violence: Hostel Dwellers Speak*, Journal of Southern African Studies 18 (1992): 192.

⁷⁵Shula Marks and Neil Andersson, *The Epidemiology and Culture of Violence*, in Political Violence and the Struggle in South Africa, ed. Chabani Manganyi and Andre' du Toit (London: Macmillan, 1990), 30.

⁷⁶Marks and Andersson, 42.

creation of gangs of juvenile delinquents. Rootless, alienated adolescents vented their frustrations over deprivations on their own or neighboring communities. The existence of large gangs of desocialized youths can have explosive effects in a context of intolerable shortages of resources and overcrowding, particularly when state and other organizations foster ethnic division. On top of this there are conservative forces comprised of older men who consider youth a threat to their authority and way of life who banded together in order to reassert their authority in an equally violent manner. This generational tension underlies many of the violent acts which have been labeled as factional fights in the Bantustans. Rooted in the past experiences of land loss and overcrowding dating back to the nineteenth century, generational tensions have become woven with notions of revenge and vendetta.⁷⁷ Paradoxically, this culture of violence as Marks calls it, intensified in the decade of reform as groups struggle for political and economic space.

This correlates nicely with the notion that the disintegration of apartheid caused the contemporary escalation of violence.⁷⁸ Apartheid and its disintegration unleashed competing forces in the struggle for economic resources. The general breakdown of apartheid laws has meant that the repressive and stringent measures which for so long controlled every aspect of black life were no longer present while at the same time

⁷⁷Marks and Andersson, 37.

⁷⁸Mike Morris and Doug Hindson, *The Disintegration of Apartheid: From Violence to Reconstruction*, South African Review 6: From Red Friday to Codesa (Johannesburg: Raven Press,1992): 155.

economic conditions have significantly worsened, especially for the rural and unskilled. As racial cleavages dissolved, conflicts converged around economic differences. The violence therefore involved poorer and more marginalized sectors of society struggling to make space for themselves. According to Segal, the conflict was distinctive not because of ethnic divisions among the participants, but because the participants were those who had been among the most severely exploited and disadvantaged by the apartheid system.⁷⁹ Chaos and violence arose as by-products of the struggle to create new social orders, especially as pressures arose over the use of limited material resources.

Other attempts to explain the violence focus on the notion of gender. It has been posited that violence was one of the compensatory mechanisms men used to reassert their masculinity in the face of the crisis in South Africa. According to Catherine Campbell, the behavioral option of violence became a socially sanctioned option for living which was available to men of all ages in order to reaffirm their manhood. The opening up of the political arena to grassroots working people, particularly over the past seven years, created an important space for the reassertion of male dominance via violence as a means of solving political conflict. Violence was seen as the only means available to reestablish control in a political system where African males had little control. While this theory provides insight into violence at the individual level and looks at the importance of the *legitimation of violence* as a means

⁷⁹Segal, 213.

to an end, it falls short in fully explaining violence at the societal level.

It is also necessary to examine the role of South African security forces within the context of violence. The government's role in funding, fueling and fanning the violence in such a way as to ethnicize it cannot be ignored. From a political point of view, the *third force* theory (as it is known) is certainly plausible. This theory states that the South African government is covertly fanning and instigating violence between rival black political organizations. It is conceivable that a third force is killing IFP members and policemen by the hundreds in order to provoke the IFP and the police into acts of violent retaliation against communities of ANC supporters. This would serve to establish a cycle of vicious attacks and counterattacks which become self-perpetuating.

On a grand scale, it seems obvious that there are advantages to be gained by destabilizing your opponents in order to strengthen your position. The very structure of apartheid was predicated on dividing and ruling the black population. Thus, logic alone would suggest that the National Party (NP) ally itself with more conservative black parties against radicals and then use ethnicity to undermine and exploit its competitors. Conveniently enough, Inkatha's desire for a strong federal state divided along racially homogenous lines was consistent with the NP's interests. Furthermore, the NP had everything to fear from an IFP-ANC alliance in constitutional negotiations leading up to the 1994 elections. Public speculation and suspicions were reinforced by the secret funding of IFP and IFP-related trade unions by government agencies, as

well as mounting evidence that the police had been less than zealous in preventing the IFP from brandishing traditional weapons in public.

Based on this mounting evidence, the Goldstone Commission found it necessary to question the government's apathy in implementing the commission's recommendations to curb the violence.⁸⁰ According to figures from the South African Institute of Race Relations, there have been a total of 15,384 fatalities attributed to political violence during the period from September 1984 to May 1993: Two thirds of which had occurred since 1990.⁸¹ Nelson Mandela has frequently made many references to state sponsored terrorism including a remark made in July 1992 in which he referred to "the fact that state security services using certain black organizations have been responsible for no less than 15,000 deaths since 1984."⁸²

Certainly, the NP's track record has contributed to this perception (Sharpeville, 1960; Soweto, 1976). The government's objective was clearly political rather than military. Its aim was to impose a political settlement on the different parties who were tired of fighting. Even now, although apartheid is gone, its wounds remain.

However, as much sense as the third force theory seems to make of the situation, it deserves some rigorous scrutinization. The Goldstone Commission has said that there has been no evidence submitted to it to substantiate accusations that the

⁸⁰John Kane-Berman, *Political Violence in South Africa* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1993), 21.

⁸¹Ibid., 13.

⁸²Speech by Nelson Mandela, President of the ANC to the United Nations Security Council on July 15, 1992 as published in the Sowetan, 18 December 1992.

government was orchestrating violence.⁸³ In November 1992, President De Klerk admitted the involvement of security force elements in the violence yet denied the existence of any *third force*:

"Obviously, there might be individuals who have their own agenda."

Following the Goldstone Commission's report, twenty-three senior officers were sent on leave or encouraged to retire. President De Klerk then stated that :

"SADF personnel had been or still are involved in illegal activities, including activities that have led to the deaths of people."⁸⁴

Although these statements were made after the fact, it was clear that the government believed these incidents to be the result of rogue activity within the government.

Reports from the Human Rights Commission (HRC) and the HEAD Commission which were used to substantiate third force allegations tended to selectively report massacres, generally citing statistics which incriminated the IFP while ignoring atrocities allegedly committed by the ANC. For instance, the HRC claimed that the government switched the violence on and off at key moments. Violence was turned on at key moments, for example during ANC conferences and campaigns, in order to discredit the ANC. Meanwhile, violence was turned off when De Klerk travelled abroad. The report failed to mention instances when violence decreased during ANC conferences and campaigns or when violence increased during De Klerk's trips.⁸⁵

⁸³*The Third Interim Report of the Commission of Inquiry Regarding the Prevention of Public Violence and Intimidation*, by R. J. Goldstone, Chairman.

⁸⁴Kane-Berman, 19.

⁸⁵Ibid., 21.

Also, the theory that the conflict between the ANC and the IFP has been instigated by the government in order to weaken the ANC at the negotiating table overlooks the fact that the conflict extends back to the 1970s, long before the NP ever thought of negotiating with the ANC. Another problem with these reports tends to be the lack of precision in definitions of violence. For instance, the HRC contended that vigilante activity under government command accounted for 83% of all politically related deaths in a twelve month period. However, the term *vigilante* was used to describe violence not only committed by vigilantes, but violence *upon* supposed vigilantes. The definition was imprecise as it stigmatized both victims and perpetrators.⁸⁶ The HRC has since stopped using this categorization of violence due to its problematic nature. And finally, these studies tend to pronounce parties guilty based on media reports of alleged misconduct which are only sometimes corroborated by legal evidence. Some of these allegations would certainly not stand up in court.⁸⁷

It is also interesting to note the public's perception of the apparent partisan involvement of the police. The feeling that the South African Police were not trusted agents of peace was apparent from interviews:

"Police complicity actually depended on shifts of the station commanders. Take for example if the station commander whose shift is at 8:00 A.M. is Zulu, he will use his powers to his advantage whereby he will command the troops to fight alongside Inkatha. The same situation does happen with the ANC. If the commander is Xhosa he will use his powers to fight alongside the ANC. If it is the Xhosa's shift, he will give the Zulus leave so that he can use his army

⁸⁶Kane-Berman, 22.

⁸⁷Ibid., 23.

against Zulus".⁸⁸

This underscores the fact that some of the violence attributed to the SAP could actually be attributed to police forces operating without any sort of state sanctioning. The public's perception of the role of the police also seemed to deemphasize the importance of larger racial political strategies of the state and focused instead on Zulu-Xhosa ethnic rivalries. The point here is that in order to understand the role of the police, you must consider the public's perceptions of ethnic conflict in relation to actual police involvement. This ethnic perception is enhanced by ethnic entrepreneurs and the press, thereby assuming a *reality* for the adherents of the various causes involved.

This is not to deny government agency in the violence. They certainly had political motivations to exploit ethnic differences. There is a history of state complicity in undercover activities which include criminal conduct. Indeed it is these activities which have enabled critics of the government and others to place blame for much of the current violence on state security forces. This along with the criminal conduct of the Kwazulu police in particular supported the perception of so many South Africans that the government and its agencies were responsible for the violence and were not trusted agents of public safety and order.⁸⁹

The third force theory ultimately loses some of its credibility. Still, as I have

⁸⁸Segal, 227.

⁸⁹*The Second Interim Report of the Commission of Inquiry Regarding Public Violence and Intimidation (Goldstone Commission)*, R. J. Goldstone, Chairman (1992).

argued, the ANC and the IFP have also had a role in the process of violence. The question remains whether violence was officially sanctioned by *legal authority* of or was it the result of unscrupulous individuals and agencies operating independently within these organizations. The third force definition could thus be changed from *acting upon the command of the government to any illegal activities which have the effect of stoking the violence*. The term becomes so nebulous as to lose all of its meaning.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, I would agree the police bear some responsibility for instigating and fanning some of the violence, particularly since they along with the National Party and Inkatha had little reason to do otherwise. At a minimum, by ignoring or not taking measures to curb the violence the government has to be regarded as culpable. Shula Marks has correctly pointed out though, that police involvement still doesn't explain the nature and the timing of the violence.⁹¹

IV The Ethnic Factor

What has been remarkable about the violence in South Africa has been the relatively insignificant role that ethnicity has played, *except* in the case of Kwazulu-Natal where ethnic violence has supposedly mushroomed in recent years. What has been the role of ethnic consciousness in the violence in Kwazulu-Natal? Gerhard Mare' contends that ethnic groups bear certain characteristics. Among these are a

⁹⁰Kane-Berman, 25.

⁹¹Marks, *Ethnic Violence*, 28.

sense of cultural affinity and history.⁹² Tracing the evolution of Zulu history shows how an acute sense of Zulu ethnic consciousness slowly spread throughout the region.

The existence of a cohesive kingdom under threat from the mid-nineteenth century, and under a king who claimed to represent all the people, probably gave Zululand a capacity for constructing a nationalist identity which was not matched anywhere else in South Africa.⁹³ Already by the late eighteenth century, there was a trend toward aggregation throughout the region, as different clans competed with one another for cattle, trade and adherents. The two principle forces that emerged in the region during this early period were the Mthethwa and the Ndawande. As a result of both internal and external pressure, their kingdoms eventually crumbled and were supplanted by the Zulu kingdom under Shaka.⁹⁴ It is questionable whether there existed a developing sense of nationalism during this time. But Eric Hobsbawm has noted that:

"...in one way or another, membership of an historical state, present or past, can act directly upon the consciousness of the common people to produce proto-nationalism."

It is clear that what did exist was a sense of loyalty to the institution of the monarchy. Order and interests were maintained by employing standing armies, comprised of men in age-sets drawn from throughout the region. This would serve to expand the

⁹²Mare, *Ethnicity and Politics*, 10-14.

⁹³Marks, *Ethnic Violence*, 39.

⁹⁴Wright, *Political Transformations*, 169.

boundaries of social identity that, up until that time, were defined by family and clan.

Also around this time there was an increase of colonial activity in the region. This could have affected relationship dynamics throughout the region, as various trade and security agreements developed with the colonists. This would have affected some groups and clans differently than others. Some groups were able to rise to positions of prominence while others were either assimilated or fled. By recognizing and dealing with the Zulu, the colonizers had in effect, reinforced notions of Zulu ethnic identity. Also, it was during this period that the mythology of Shaka and the mighty Zulu military machine was produced by both African communities and the literate whites who encountered them.⁹⁵

The increasing development of mining from the 1870s necessitated increasingly larger numbers of laborers drawn from local populations. The British were also fearful of Cetshwayo who was believed by many to be restoring Shaka's notorious military machine. Fearing that powerful African kingdoms such as the Zulu would interfere with their economic interests in the region, the British began a policy of conquest, divide and rule. This was consistent with their policy of *indirect rule* which was instituted throughout much of east Africa because of financial costs and the logistical difficulties of maintaining a large presence in the region. As a result of the Anglo-Zulu War in 1879, the Zulu kingdom was fractured into thirteen smaller components and chiefs sympathetic to colonial interests were appointed. Initial Zulu

⁹⁵Marks, *Ethnic Violence*, 37.

military successes during the war reaffirmed and reinforced both settler stereotypes and the Zulu self-image of repudiated Zulu military prowess.

In order to stymie the radicalization of the labor force and to keep Africans from settling in urban areas, a native reserve policy was developed. Doing so recognized and reinforced notions of traditional Zulu society, among both the colonists and the Zulu. Colonial authorities tried to recreate *tribalism* through a policy of adaptation and academic curriculums which were based upon native languages and histories taught by missionaries. The colonists believed that this was reflective of history as the Zulu were the predominant kingdom in the region during the time of British conquest. This had the effect of institutionalizing Zulu ethnic identity and memory in Natal.

Despite increasing involvement in the world economy, British economic policies in southern Africa tended to conserve rather than restructure African social forms. In Natal and Zululand, the results were to perpetuate parochial group loyalties and residual land claims.⁹⁶ The 1920s saw the emergence of an African elite with significant economic and political stakes. They realized the advantage of exploiting Zulu ethnic identity as a way to expand their economic power and to counter the emergence of radical labor movements and the negative effects of migrant labor which they considered a threat to their livelihood. Traditional authorities too felt threatened by the increased affects of migrant labor as these tended to erode the very basis upon

⁹⁶Marks, *Ethnic Violence*, 38.

which their power rested. And finally, the surviving Zulu royal descent group was equally eager to reassert its authority throughout the region. Thus, the stage was set for the creation of the alliance known as *Inkatha* to promote Zulu cultural interests and the monarchy.⁹⁷

The South African government was equally eager to stymie the emergence of radical labor movements as well as search for ways to justify its Bantustan policy in order to make this more palatable to Africans. The government's Bantustan policy gave ethnicity a continued reality by providing material incentives for ethnic identification. It provided a platform and incentives for local politicians; an infrastructure for control involving sympathetic chiefs and headmen paid by the state; a local police force; and access to jobs in the bureaucracy and business opportunities for an expanding black middle class. Eventually, ethnicity would be tied to access to local housing, political representation and schooling.⁹⁸ This all would have had the effect of reinforcing an expanding ethnic consciousness among the inhabitants of Zululand. The *other* were now the colonists. History and notions of ethnicity were now being used to impart and expand ethnic consciousness for politically expedient purposes. Eventually, conflicts emerged between those who supported the politics of exclusion based on narrower ethnic categories and those who supported the politics of inclusion based on wider notions of cross-cutting identities.

⁹⁷Marks, *Ethnic Violence*, 40.

⁹⁸Ibid., 32-3.

In Inkatha, we see the successful exploitation of Zulu ethnic identity. One of the principle reasons for its success was because of its grounding in historical reality. The history of their kingdom and its ethnic symbolism provided a ready and rich resource for culture brokers.⁹⁹ Inkatha took Zulu ethnic identity and used it to legitimate and incite violence, in conditions of economic, political and cultural deprivation, for political purposes. Buthelezi appealed to an idealized version of history and modified collective memories of the past for his political advantage. After all, an idealized version of history has mass appeal. All nations strive to create the myth of history in order to create a sense of belonging, and to instill a foundation of common ideals which serve to bond the nation. It is irrelevant whether the event occurred as remembered or whether it occurred at all. Take for example notions of nationalism and the United States' involvement in the Gulf War. It could be safely argued that on a national level our involvement in the war was driven by economic interest and strategic advantage. However, in order for the government to justify its involvement to the public it had to appeal to notions of democratic idealism and fair-play which were rooted in our national mythology. Soldiers fought because their *value systems* were threatened by the actions of an *undemocratic aggressor*. The government appealed to notions of fairness and decency and the media relayed stories of enemy atrocities against non-combatants. Thus, the political climate was altered by appealing to certain ideals and emotive values which had their basis in national

⁹⁹Marks, *Ethnic Violence*, 39.

mythology. One could say that nations fight for economic and political interests: People fight for ideals and a sense of who they are.

Zuluness was not merely crafted from above by personalities like Buthelezi. In the case of Kwazulu-Natal, the larger political interests of Buthelezi were veiled behind notions of Zulu ethnic identity and the appeal this held for the average person. Zuluness was a mobilizing agent and was readily open to manipulation because it had continued reality in popular consciousness, and because that consciousness was continually being constructed and composed by the people themselves. By existing in the popular consciousness, ethnic identity acted as a powerful and emotive force in shaping the violent nature of large mass movements like Inkatha.

For many, the ethnic dimensions of the conflict with the ANC were central. When asked about the nature of the conflict, the ethnic component was often central to the explanation of hostel dwellers on the Rand:

"It wasn't political violence to us. It was Zulu and Xhosa violence. If it was political, it would have been Inkatha and the ANC. But because many Zulus were involved in Inkatha and many Xhosas in the ANC, those newspaper reporters then said it was political violence and it spread like political violence."¹⁰⁰

To the participants, violence was a rational response to perceived threats against their values and identities. And violently-affirmed identities provoke equally powerful counter-identities. The killing of Zulu migrant workers because they are thought to be Inkatha members can cause other non-Inkatha Zulus to embrace an allegiance

¹⁰⁰Segal, 219.

wrongly ascribed to them.¹⁰¹ Thus, you cannot underestimate the importance of an individual's identity. This is the lens through which individuals view the world and ultimately it is the individual who chooses whether or not to react and how to react to perceived threats.

Many Zulu emotionally connected with the symbols of Zulu culture, the notion of common history and notions of their own uniqueness that sets them apart from the other. This had the effect of instilling in them a sense of pride in the past and present dictating the nature of the violence. And in South Africa as elsewhere, such an *ethnic identity* was easily extended to political behavior and even affiliation in the workplace. Thus, ethnic consciousness has to be regarded as constituting a very powerful force in the violence in Kwazulu-Natal.

Being Zulu meant different things to different people. It is important to note that how the Zulu used their *ethnicity* differs. The social identification of Zuluness did not necessarily determine a constant set of responses from an individual, nor did it include the same set of self descriptions for each and every member of the Zulu ethnic group. This was apparent from the fact that many supporters of the ANC spoke Zulu and referred to themselves as Zulu, whether through association with the language or by the fact that they resided in Kwazulu or Natal. These variations were tolerated to some degree by Inkatha but those who crossed the established boundaries were dealt with harshly. This would explain the fact that most of the fatalities in

¹⁰¹Nixon, 17.

Kwazulu-Natal were the result of inter-Zulu conflict.

As argued earlier, the person on the street fights for ideals and notions of injustice. Thus, I contend that economic causes were not the only source of violence in Kwazulu-Natal. If they were, it would be difficult to explain the fact that over half the violent deaths that occurred after 1990 occurred in the Pretoria/Witwatersrand/-Vereeniging region, an area that has the highest per-capita income in South Africa.¹⁰² But this figure can be somewhat misleading in that it does not reflect the income gap between white and black South Africans. But how could you explain the fact that there were other places of extreme poverty and repression where violence was not a factor? Furthermore relying to heavily on socio-economic factors tends to mask the political interests at stake.¹⁰³ And one would be remiss to mention the fact that Yugoslavia, once one of the most prosperous countries in Eastern Europe quickly degenerated into organized violence mobilized along ethnic lines after the collapse of the Soviet Union while poorer former East Bloc countries have not.

The mundane construction of Zuluness from below was greatly fortified by Inkatha's reliance on ethnic forms of mobilization. So what you have is an ethnically *self-aware* population of seven million Zulus with a political leadership that continually appealed to and reinforced Zulu ethnicity on a regular basis through various medias such as cultural holidays, speeches and newspapers reports. Buthelezi

¹⁰²Kane-Berman, 13.

¹⁰³Chidester, 158.

used ethnicity to further his political agenda. The National Party used ethnicity to destabilize its opponents and improve its bargaining position. Clearly this elite manipulation was needed to "stir the pot", so to speak, in order to give ethnic politics a violent twist within an environment of economic degradation and political repression.

V
Conclusion

I have looked at Zulu ethnicity in what is today Kwazulu-Natal in an attempt to examine its role in fomenting and sustaining the violence that was characteristic of the region from 1984-1994. It is evident that the complexities of any society including South Africa, preclude the existence of any simple explanation for an asocial behavior like violence. It is clear that there are many deep-seated social and structural factors involved in this situation dating back in history for nearly two hundred years. And what makes explaining violence even all the more complicated is that all these factors interact together in such a way as to make them inseparable. Therefore in order to understand the violence, it is necessary to take into account the myriad of social, economic and political factors and examine how they all interact to create this *culture of violence* as Shula Marks has called it. Therefore, the reasons for the violence in Kwazulu-Natal are quite complicated and not easily or even wholly explicable.

It is however, short sighted to dismiss ethnicity as a contributing factor in the violence in South Africa. It is clear that ethnic perceptions weigh heavily in the violence. There are always ethnic identities to be mobilized via common language,

kinship and custom which are deeply in-grained and powerfully felt. Ethnicity is a phenomenon evolving over time, constantly manipulated and recreated by the perceptions of the people themselves along with various elites with varied interests. Like an onion, each successive layer is wrapped in a skin of self-image of its corresponding generation. In the case of Kwazulu-Natal, Buthelezi was able to exploit and manipulate Zuluness as a means to provoke violent clashes on the part of his adherents in order to further his political ambitions. He successfully transmitted his ideas by appealing to certain emotive values of his constituents: The notion of manhood and the disciplined Zulu warrior; the notion of womanhood as an appeal to mothers of men and warriors; the notion of respect for traditional authority and the importance of family and the sanctity of Zulu culture and language. It becomes apparent that Buthelezi has taken history and transformed it into a cohesive political ideology via appeals to Zulu ethnicity.

To Buthelezi's constituents who lacked any legitimate means of protest due to the restrictive nature of apartheid, violence became an almost socially acceptable method of dispute resolution during a period characterized by intense political, social and economic competition for scarce resources. Ethnic identity was very real to many of the inhabitants of Kwazulu-Natal. But it took the likes of Buthelezi to mobilize them through mass a movement like Inkatha in order to give it a nefarious twist for political ends. As a result it is likely that ethnicity will continue to be a problem in the future politics of South Africa because it now exists in the popular consciousness

and because there are ethnic entrepreneurs with political aspirations who understand how to exploit it. For South Africa, this will render democracy more than just a process of elections every few years. Democracy will require, among other things, a certain level of openness; the freedom to ask and answer questions; it will involve the politics of inclusion rather than exclusion; it will require the participation of all members of society. Democracy will necessitate that ethnic boundaries be porous, allowing escape and entry. The tighter the definition of membership (as in Inkatha), the more totalitarian an ethnic group becomes. If only one or a small group of elites are allowed to define that group, the less democratic the entire society is likely to be.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴Mare, 4.

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